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YZDRA

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

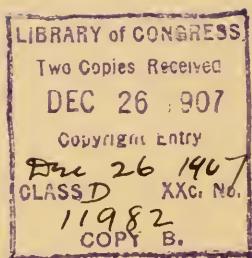
LOUIS V. LEDOUX.

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LOUIS V. LEDOUX

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Characters.

Indians:

POROS —Emperor of that portion of India
now known as the Central Panjab.
THE PRINCE —His son.
A BRAHMAN.
RAJAH OF ABHISARA.
HALF-WITTED BOY, who serves as a JESTER.
MESSENGERS.
YZDRA'S NURSE.
and
YZDRA —Daughter of Poros.

Greeks:

HEPHAESTION—Alexander's favorite General.
PROTEAS —A follower of the camp.
FIRST SOLDIER.
SECOND SOLDIER.
THIRD SOLDIER.
A PAGE.
A SLAVE
and
ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

Time: 326 B. C.

This play is founded upon a story told in the *Secreta Secretorum*, a book which falsely purports to be Aristotle's manual of advice to Alexander.

An English version which dates from about 1400, gives the legend as follows:

“Alexander, thynk of ye doyng of ye Quene of Inde whenne she sente to the, by cause to haue thy frendschipe, many presentes and noble gyftes amonge ye whilke a full fair mayden was sent to the that of her childhood drank and was norschyd with venyms yn-so-mekyl that her kynde was turned to ye kynde of serpentys. . . . And certainly, but thou hadde ben warnyd by me there-of, thy seluyn hadde takyn deed, thurgh ye hete of fleschly kennynge with here.”

ACT I.

SCENE I.—An outpost in Alexander's camp.

SCENE II.—Throne-room in the palace of Poros.

SCENE III.—Outside the house of Yzdra.

Scene I.

An outpost in Alexander's camp between the Kyber Pass and the River Indus. Three Greek soldiers discovered preparing supper.

1ST S.: Is not that soup ready yet?

2ND S.: Not yet; have patience.

1ST S.: 'Tis five years since I left Macedon and in all that time have I done nothing else but have patience. 'Tis a wonder that I have not yet lain down somewhere and patiently given my carcass to the vultures. My patience wanes.

3RD S.: In that we agree with you. All the Greeks talk of nothing but home. 'Tis long since we saw Macedon.

2ND S.: How much farther is the end of the world, think you?

3RD S.: I know not. They say this India is a vast realm and we are now but upon its borders; but what may be beyond, or when Alexander will have enough of conquest, I cannot guess.

1ST S.: How fares your shoulder?

2ND S.: But badly; the wound will not heal. I wish that barbarian dart thrower was at the other end of my spear.

1ST S.: Pray Zeus that the next barbarians be not better marksmen!

3RD S.: As for me, I lost a great toe before Thebes, was wounded through the body in the battle with Darius, and have had many lesser hurts,

yet do I most complain of these long marches whereon hunger feedeth upon me like the vulture on Prometheus.

2ND S.: In truth we all should give worship to Prometheus, for did he not like us, suffer for the benefit of others? Our bones cry out with weariness and our stomachs with hunger, while out of all this pain comes what profit?—Honor to Alexander.

3RD S.: That is so, but for one word of praise from him we would all march into the outermost ocean or whatever else may be beyond this accursed India.

1ST S.: Aye! There is no one like him. When we are hungry, he is without food; when we are burned or frozen, he is the same.

3RD S.: Stand! Who comes?

Enter Alexander.

ALEX.: 'Tis I, the King. How go things here?

2ND S.: Well, my Lord.

1ST S.: Except for hunger.

ALEX.: It was a hard march to-day, my Children, but what are a little hunger and weariness compared with the honor that we gain?

3RD S.: May it be known, oh King, whither now you lead us?

ALEX.: We are approaching the kingdom of one Taxiles, a monarch who rules a fertile land, and beyond him, bordered by a great river, is the mighty empire of Indian Poros, and beyond that I know not.

2ND S.: 'Tis far from Macedon, my Lord.

ALEX.: Yea, farther than any, save Herakles, adventured before us, and none other has reaped honor like to ours. Heartily, heartily, my men!

When you return the Greeks will hold you as demigods and those who choose to remain I will make rulers over fair cities.

1ST S.: 'Tis so, indeed.

3RD S.: Honor to Alexander!

ALEX.: Now farewell, I go throughout the camp seeing that none shall lack.

ALL: Farewell, oh King.

Exit Alexander.

1ST S.: Indeed, none can gain such honor as those who follow him.

2ND S.: Nor such riches.

3RD S.: He will be Emperor of the world ere long.

2ND S.: The soup is ready.

Scene II.

The throne-room in the palace of Poros. The Prince and the Rajah are playing at dice; others are watching the game and lounging about the room. Some lean over the players in excitement.

The Prince rises angrily.

PRINCE: I play no more! The time is evil-starred
And dice have been the bondage of my house.
I play no more.

RAJAH: My Lord, the luck may change.

PR: Again I say the time is evil-starred.

Last night portentous omens broke my rest,
A wailing jackal would not let me sleep;
And once I rose from hidden dreams to see
If yet the golden car of Surya climbed
The East, when lo! a raven, croaking, passed.

I know not what may hap, but this I know,—
 Some fate impendeth in the womb of time,
 Some evil fate, with darkness fraught and
 doom,
 Whose shadow now above our royal halls
 Hangs cloud-like, with its lightnings still in
 leash;
 But where or how or when the bolt may fall
 I cannot tell.

RAJ. : When lightning strikes, 'tis said
 To choose the tallest trees.

PR. : For this I fear
 The gods have sent misfortune's mandate stern
 To me, or to my Sire, whose royal head
 O'ertops our empire in its sovereignty.

RAJ. : Perchance the war with Taxiles; perchance
 This Grecian Alexander who has come
 Through Persia conquering.

PR. : Perchance 'tis he.
 The Greeks, indeed, draw near.

*Enter an aged Brahman with two or three
 disciples following.*

PR. : To you I bow,
 Most holy Sage. Your blessing now I crave.

The Brahman gives his blessing.

PR. : We wait the King.

BR. : I join his council here
 And speak to them of oracles fulfilled.

RAJ. : My Lord, the King is even now at hand.

*The sound of trumpets is heard and the
 King enters in state with the tributary
 kings who have a row of thrones on the
 left and lower down than that of Poros;*

behind each is an ensign bearer. Then follow the counsellors, bow-bearers, javelin bearers, etc. Poros ascends an ivory throne, the arms of which are fashioned as elephants with jewelled eyes. Behind is a canopy of peacock plumes. The Prince goes to a throne on the right, opposite the tributary kings. All bow low while Poros ascends.

PR. : All-hail the warlike Poros !

ALL : Hail ! All-hail !

Poros motions the Brahman to an empty seat beside the Prince and close to the throne, and as he approaches it, stands to receive the benediction of Holy Water, the vessel containing which is handed up by one of the disciples. During the ceremony all bow low as before. Then, at a sign from one of the officials, the trumpet sounds three times. The king rises.

Po. : Be welcome here, ye tributary kings,
 Who, arch-like, prop our dome of sovereignty ;
 We bid you welcome here as counsellors ;
 For oft while wisdom searches devious ways,
 A hero grasps with tiger-spring the goal,—
 While wisdom weighs the chances, valor acts
 And action turns the balances of Fate.

The Rajah of Abhisara, who occupies the throne nearest to Poros, rises.

RAJ. : At your behest, dread Lord, once more we come,
 And own your lordship. Clouds are we, and you

The lambent sun before whose face we shine
With borrowed splendor.

To the Brahman.

We fain would learn the cause which brings us
here,
And wait your words;

(Turning to the others)

but ere he speak, let all
Save those who share our counsels pass without.

Towards the close of the King's speech, a half-witted Jester, clad in fantastic garb, has crept up to the throne and seated himself on the steps.

PR. : Dost thou share the King's counsel that thou sittest there while thy betters withdraw themselves?

JEST. : Aye, forsooth. Am I not worthy?

PR. : What dost thou know more than these?

He motions toward those who are leaving.

JEST. : I know to remain sober.

PR. : Poor Boy ! No one offers to waste good wine on thee ; 'twere as well to offer peacock's brains to an elephant and say—Good Sir, prithee partake ; the morsel is delicate.

Po. : Enough of this ; peace, Boy, peace.

Poros motions him to leave, but he steals in behind the others and overhears the conference.

Good Sir, we wait to hear your wisdom speak,
This Fool has much abused our clemency.

BR. : The lotus flowers have spread upon the streams ;
The Pleiades have risen, wheeled and set
Some twenty seasons since the moonless night
When I, observing fixedly the stars,
Saw strange conjunctions spelling love and death,
And offered sacrifice, whose omen told
Of one new-born within the royal house
Who held the fate of empires in her hand.

PR. : Within the royal house ?

RAJ. : What maid was that ?

BR. : No more I learned; but marked within the
West

A warlike planet flaming through the sky
That other stars grew pale and one went out,
But passing burned a moment lurid, red.

PR. : Could wisdom teach you what events might
cast

Such shadows on the calm blue eyes of night
That look upon the world?

BR. : In doubt I left
The deep seclusion of my forest life
And took the long untrodden path which led
To where ye strove with unrealities.

RAJ. : These unrealities seem real indeed,
To us who strive, and striving win or lose.
Your pardon, Sir, I speak untutored words,
But from the heart.

BR. : Like soldiers ye are pressed
By those around and see naught else, but I,
The chief, observe the general battle's plan.
Ye strive for present vantage, I for good
Unseen.

PR. : Yet both perchance are naught. Who
knows?

PO. : We wander from our purpose, Sir, speak on.

BR. : I moved through darkness onward till the
dawn

Came stealing pallid up a cold grey East,
When met me runners telling how the Queen
In dying, bore a maid of matchless form—
Divinely fashioned in her babyhood.

PR. : My hidden sister! I was then a child,
But do remember dimly. Lives she yet?

PO. : She lives, but I have never seen her face.

RAJ. : That seems most strange.

PO. : The gods demanded her
And I did yield, though much against my will.

BR. : I offered sacrifice to read her fate,
 But sudden blindness fell upon my sight;
 In trance I stood and tranced thus I spoke;
 "The gods have willed the tender maid should
 grow
 In solitude, on poisons fed until
 She gains their power, and this in time shall
 be."

RAJ. : On poisons fed, to grow a poisonous thing!

PR. : On poisons! Sire, to rear a Princess thus
 Is horrible!

Po. : Yet thus the gods decreed
 She should be reared; and I obeyed their will.
 On poisons she was fed.

PR. : But for what end?

Po. : The gods no reasons gave.

BR. : At least not then,
 For on my eyes the day returning rolled;
 I knew no more. The King remembers well
 My words oracular, but ye are strange
 To these most sure events I now relate.

Po. : Aye, well do I remember; and the babe
 Was given in charge unto a skillful nurse,
 By this same Brahman brought. They took her
 hence,

And sent report each year of how the maid
 To fuller stature grown, grew still more fair.

BR. : As wise as fair, for I have taught her much.

Po. : At last her youth has bloomed to womanhood
 More strangely beautiful than Love itself;
 But so her life is with the poison charged
 That death to man within her kisses lurks.

BR. : The King speaks truth; her kiss is present
 death,

She kills with sweetness like a poisoned flower.

PR. : This is an awful thing.

RAJ. : And very strange.

PR. : I almost doubt its truth.

BR. :

Yet true it is.

RAJ. : But have you any proof?

PO. :

We need no proof

Beyond the oracle, yet proof there is.

BR. : Not long ago she kissed a little child

And some few hours thereafter, lo ! it died.

PR. : That leaves no doubt.

RAJ. : It might have had the fever.

PO. : 'Tis impious to doubt ; I am convinced.

RAJ. : The fever was abroad ; it might have been ;

And yet this death confirms the oracle ;

It must indeed be true.

PO. :

The truth is clear,

But what the further will of Siva plans

For her I may not guess ; nor whose the lot

To cull this deadly flower of loveliness.

JES. : *Aside.*

Oh, horrible ! horrible ! I pray Siva that she
be not preserved for me.

BR. : Now come we to the point. Three night agone
A dream disturbed my rest, with presage dark,
That thus I do interpret. Persia's king—
The Grecian Alexander, eastward leads
His conquering armies. Men and power are
his—

The Macedonian phalanx none can face ;
Besides, the gods, of favour, grant him youth
With riper wisdom tempered ; courage, skill,
And steadfast purpose. Now let Poros send
To him the maid, enrobed in loveliness,
To offer friendship from our kingdom's chief,
And bind in marriage bonds himself to us.
Thus wisdom reaches where your valour fails ;
The youth is amorous and frank withal,
And would accept such offers frankly made,
If backed with other gifts befitting kings ;

But let him once her poisonous kisses drink
He dies a present death—most sure and swift.

Po. : No need of this! I fear not any man;
Much less this Grecian. What have we to fear
Who lead against him fifty thousand men
With chariots and elephants! Could he
With used, wayworn troops, afar from home,
Defeat our army and subdue ourself!
'Tis madness thus to think! I will not stoop
To crave alliance with this upstart youth,
Who smote the Medes in beds of luxury,
And knows not how a warrior people fight.
We wait his coming. Should he dare to come
We meet him battling manlike, face to face.
We fear him not; what says our valiant son?

During this speech, the General and the tributary kings have shown signs of approval. The prince has stood in deep thought.

RAJ. : *Aside.*

Though valorous in action, slow to strike,
I fear his counsel.

PR. : *Slowly and thoughtfully.*

Sire, your words are just;
Before your age, your wisdom and your throne
I bōw submissive, yet my thought finds voice.
'Tis rashness more than bravery to fight
Unnecessary battles, risking thus,
Through pride, our subjects, wealth and
empiry;
And when the gods have shown in oracles—
By him made manifest who speaks their will,
The way to cope with present circumstance,
To choose another means were blasphemous,
And fraught with swift disaster: Gods avenge.

RAJ. : My Liege, till now has Taxiles alone

With unsubmissive eyes beheld your reign;
 Your only foe was he; your only dread;
 And first to him must Alexander come
 In marching eastward from the bounds of Ind.
 Then like an eagle when two lions fight,
 Will you, unscathed, behold the bloody strife,
 Until upon the victor, torn and weak,
 You swoop with conquering pinions. Thus, my
 Lord,
 Your foes defeat each other. Yours the spoils.
 Po.: Let Taxiles and Alexander fight!
 We sitting watchful, strike when both are weak.
 No need to bend our royal dignity
 Before young Macedon.

To the Brahman

Your pardon, Sir,
 That thus we plan our present policy
 Observing not your precepts. Thanks we give
 And reverence. Your wisdom passes ours
 But not in this.

BR.: Nay, hear me speak; the
 gods— —

Po.: You have not read in this, their will aright.
 Our choice is clear.

RAJ.: And just.

PR.: My Father, pause!

Po.: *Rising angrily.*

I overrule all further conference.

Enter a messenger hastily. He is soiled with travel. He bows and Poros motions him to speak.

MES.: Taxiles has received Alexander into his capital and has formed an alliance with him for the

purpose of conquering our kingdom. They are already collecting reinforcements, but the Grecian plans to rest his army for some weeks before starting.

BR.: The gods are swift avengers.

PR.: Ah, the gods!

The General and the tributary kings look dumfounded.

RAJ.: With Taxiles and Alexander both
We cannot cope.

Po.: Our will is overruled
By Siva's will. The maiden shall be sent;
Let some provide a stately embassage
And fitting gifts. Abhisara shall lead.

To the Brahman.

Do you instruct the Princess in our will,
But let her not suspect her poisonous power.

He bows to the Brahman and then as the curtain falls, he goes out followed by his train.

Scene III.

A jasmine bower under a blossoming mango tree, outside the forest home of Yzdra. A practicable door on the right.

Yzdra discovered walking about and talking to the Nurse, who sits at the base of the tree. Yzdra resembles Poros slightly, but enough to suggest the idea of heredity.

Yz. : The night has laid once more its soothing hand
Upon the eyes of Life ; I sometimes dream
That love is like the moonlight after day—
A touch of peace ; and then the lightning flash
Seems like to love ;—this love I have not known
But fain would know. Ah me ! My heart is sick
To-night. I long—and yet for what I long
I cannot tell.

She moves about touching the flowers tenderly.

The placid moonlight rests
Upon my jasmine flowers that gleam like stars ;
The timid fawns, the birds are all at peace,
Save only Bulbul, who with passionate heart
Still yearns, and yearning cries across the night
A sadness undefined that answers mine.
How beautiful is this our forest home,
Where every season brings some fresh delight ;
And yet I find no more the old content
In birds and flowers, the moonlight and the dawn.

After a pause, she goes over to the nurse, kneels down and starts to put her cheek against the nurse's. The nurse shrinks away and pushes her back.

My life is incomplete, it something lacks;
 Perchance this very love I dream about.
 Would I be happy could I feel a kiss—
 A warrior's kisses burning on my lips,
 Strong hands about my breasts; a man's strong
 hands

And not like his—the only man I know?

This Brahman makes me shudder, yet is kind.

NURSE: It may be even now a lover comes.

YZ.: *playfully*: Who seeks for me alone throughout the world?

The nurse makes an ill-tempered gesture of assent.

And Kama's shafts at last shall sting in me—
 No more a girl, but woman fully grown?

Enter the Brahman. He hears the last lines.

BR.: You dream of love; I love's fulfillment bring.

He blesses her. The nurse goes into the house.

YZ.: With blessing, holy Sage, your pardon give
 That thus my inmost mind is disarrayed,
 And all my heart disclosed to your ear.
 Accept, although delayed, no less sincere
 A welcome.

BR.: Fair you seem to-night, and pure
 As conquering souls that merge themselves in
 Brahm.

'Tis right a maiden's heart should dream of
 love,
 For so the gods have willed.

These moonlit flowers
 With nature's incense fill the drowsy air;
 'Twere hard, my Child, to leave so sweet a spot!

Yz. : Not hard for me ! I full confession make,
 Since you of half my counsel are aware,
 This solitude and silence pall me quite ;
 A woman grown, I long for woman's life ;—
 To see the ways of cities and the court,
 To know the valiant princes of my race,
 To smile above the tourney, choosing out
 Some hero who will call me Queen and Wife ;
 And after that to live as she of whom
 Our ancient writings speak, whose love was
 strong
 To bend relentless Yama to its will,
 And bring her lord from death's domain to life.
 And then I long to do some worthy deed,
 Or service for the state.

Br. : Aye, that were good.
 Yz. : 'Tis surely best to live and not to dream.

With double meaning ;—half to himself.

Br. : A maiden's dreams are far indeed from life.
 Yz. : Full-well I know the blossoming of flowers,
 The Koël's cry, the rise and set of stars,
 But yet I miss the meaning of the world
 Off here, alone ; of much rest ignorant,
 And much—yea, very much I lack. Good Sir,
 My words are wild and may offend, but speak
 I must.

Br. : Some deed of courage you would do ?
 Yz. : To do is mine, to act, for I am strong,—
 Yea, very strong, and was not born to watch
 The dull monotony of dawn and dusk
 In meaningless passivity. There flows
 Within my veins a warrior-people's blood ;
 I long to live my life before men's eyes,—
 A Princess of my house.

Br. : What would you do ?

Yz. : What Siva plans for me—that would I do,
 But well I know I was not made for this
 Half-life, grown empty now of good or charm.
 I long to live my life, to do some deed,
 And live in fame to future ages sung.

Br. : You have been still a child, but now you seem
 A very woman, yea, a Queen indeed.

Yz. : Part girl, part woman, and part man I think,
 But all alive with youth and eagerness
 To do and dare, to live and greatly love.
 Ah, life I crave with all its splendid chance,
 Its days of action and its nights of love;
 Not this poor shadow-world wherein I faint;
 Yet know my strength.

Br. : What further would you ask
 Or tell?

Yz. : The nurse, who loved me well of old,
 Has acted strangely toward me, now no more
 She lets me nestle close, or kiss her cheek,
 As was my wont. And once, not long ago—
 It was the day I found the first spring rose,
 There came a child, who, heeding not his way,
 Had hither roamed. I took the baby up
 And held it to my heart and kissed its lips,
 When lo! my nurse came running in a fright,
 And snatched the child away; but ere the dusk
 A fearful sickness through his body stole;
 And when the morning bloomed the child was
 dead.

But she avoids my questions, tells me naught.

Enter Nurse.

I ask you this: Why should the child have died?

The Nurse and the Brahman look at each other significantly. She shows by a gesture that she cannot or will not answer.

BR. : The fever kills thus swiftly oftentimes.

Yz. : But why must I—a woman—live deprived
Of full-orbed life and love? You cage me here
By what authority?

BR. : *To Nurse.* Poor child, Poor child!
This life she craves bears bitter fruit for her;
Yet mandates of the gods must be obeyed.

To Yzdra.

My Yzdra, now has come the time of your
Releasement; now I lead you out toward life,
That seems so beautiful when seen afar—
Toward life and love.

Yz. : Toward love? O tell me who!
What way of life is mine, what happy fate?

BR. : With you I go to seek an Emperor
Who rules o'er half the world—a valiant man
And young; to him would Poros give your hand,
A bond of firm alliance 'twixt the states.
The rest I shall unfold within the house.

NURSE: A bond of death! I would not have his lot.

Yz. : *Dreamily.*

An emperor, a valiant man and young!

Turning to him:

How could a maiden reared in forest ways
And ignorant of courts succeed to please
A king like him—

(Murmuring) who rules o'er half the world?

BR. : A woman's instinct teaches more than courts.

Yz. : But look! The petals of the dawn unfold,
Like woman's love from girlhood blossoming—
A presage this of future happiness.

BR. : I follow you within.

Yz. : Till then, farewell.

She bows for his blessing and then walks gladly toward the house.

BR.: (to nurse): At court will Poros give you recompense.

We shall not need you more.

YZ.: Can she not come?

BR.: You will not want her in the new glad life.

YZ.: Farewell, then, Nurse, and give me joy at last.

She goes up to embrace her. The nurse shoves her away.

NURSE: Nay, touch me not.

To the Brahman. I am well rid of her.

I go to seek the King and claim my wage.

YZ.: You will not say "Farewell?"

The Nurse goes off toward the forest.

Yzdra looks sadly after her for a moment.

What can it mean?

Exit Yzdra toward the house.

BR.: After a pause. Watching her.

The ways of Fate are dark and hard to tread.

Enter Rajah.

RAJ.: I trust she will be ready by the morn.

BR.: Aye! ready will she be, and glad she is
To learn of life.

RAJ.: Poor child! She does not guess
Her power?

BR.: No, and never shall guess till
The deed is done; for all the retinue,
Except ourselves, are ignorant as she.

RAJ.: I sent the King's provision to her house.

BR.: Much yet remains to do; I go within.

RAJ. : She must be kept aloof from all her maids.

BR. : I will arrange for that.

RAJ. : Now fare you well.

Excunt—the Brahman toward the house and the Rajah into the forest.

The stage is vacant for a moment, then attendants carry equipments into the house. One of them leaves a spear beside the door. After they have come out again, enter Yzdra from the house. Voices are heard within.

Yz. : Oh, Life! Life! Life! An emperor and young;
A valiant man; and Persia's king as well.
Have dreams come true? My head is all awhirl.
But why have I been kept till now, so long
In solitude and ignorance? Why must they still
Slink sideways from my questions, tell me not
What most I seek to learn—why this has been?
There is some mystery; but now, ah, well!
It does not matter now, for life is mine.
But, soft! for someone comes.

Enter the Jester from the forest. He appears frightened and disheveled and looks about him half timorously, half vacantly.

Yz. : What wouldst thou here?

JES. : I followed on their track that I might see
Them when they start.

Yz. : Who start, and who art thou?

JES. : It has been very dark and far it seems
From home. I wish that I were back again,
What noise is that?

Yz. : A beast that passed, no more.

JES. : I wish that I were safely back again.

Yz. : Whence didst thou come?

JES. : I know not who you are.

YZ. : I am the Princess Yzdra; who art thou?

JES. : The Princess Yzdra?

YZ. : Nay, it is not strange
That thou hast never heard of me, for all
My life till now has passed in solitude—
Alone from infancy.

JES. : *Not quite understanding but remembering
dimly.*

In solitude?

Alone?

Yzdra moves toward him.

YZ. : But tell me what thou seekest, then
The Brahman here will teach us of the way.

JES. : The Brahman? You, alone?

*She steps nearer him and he shrinks away, but
does not yet quite realize who she is.*

YZ. : I wonder why
This boy seems so afraid of me. Poor thing!
The Princess I; I would not hurt thee. Come.

*He looks around as though wanting to run,
but cowers back against the tree.*

JES. : The Princess! Off! Stand off!

YZ. : Poor boy! Poor boy!

*As she moves still nearer to him, he seizes a
stone as if to throw it at her.*

In truth I would not hurt thee. See how kind
I am. Thou seemest like a little child
Whom I could hold beside me; almost kiss
In pity.

He starts to throw the stone; but, seeing her step up to him, evidently unafraid, he hesitates.

Why, what ails thee now? But see
How kind the hand that rests upon thy head.

JES. : O gods! The poisoned kiss! The poisoned kiss!
I would not die. 'Twas not for me they reared
You thus. Oh, touch me not.

He cowers down at her feet. She places her hand gently on his head.

The kiss! and death!

He falls on the ground, sobbing convulsively.

YZ. : The kiss and death? The poisoned kiss?
'Twas not
For me they reared you thus? Oh, touch me not?
The kiss and death? The poisoned kiss? What
can
He mean? Poor boy, his wits are all distraught.

Moving from him, then, after a pause, looking around at him.

Poor boy.

She stands musing.

The poisoned kiss. The kiss and death.

She shakes her head; and then, suddenly beginning to understand, a look of agony comes into her face.

The child I kissed that died. My forest life.
The nurse that shrinks away.

Wildly.

It cannot be!

She staggers and supports herself against the tree.

Why lead me out and show me aught of life,
If life is not for me?

Thinking.

The poisoned kiss.
And death. He said what else? I must remember.
He said 'twas not for him. What then? For whom?

Suddenly understanding it all.

For Alexander death!

And what for me?
I must learn more.

As she staggers toward the Jester, the Brahman enters.

Thou crawling snake! Thou mock
Of holiness! What good to thee shall come
From Alexander's death, my poisoned life?

BR.: What meaneth this?

YZ.: *Trying to control herself.*

He told—he told me all.

The Brahman makes a sudden movement toward the Jester, and then, changing his mind, steps to the door and motions an attendant. He whispers to him and then the attendant leads out the Jester.

BR.: *Half to himself.*

No prattle more from him.

YZ.: Thou takest life—
A human life against the holy Law?

BR. : The Law must bend before necessity.

Yzdra, seizing the spear and stepping towards him.

YZ. : Then I take thine, thou jackal masked as man,
Thou grey hyena tricked in holy weeds;
The blood of all the princes of my race
Comes battling upward round about my heart;
Unsexed, I stand a hero of my house,
And claim the vengeance due, a coward's death.

She steps forward to strike him; but he gazes at her unflinchingly and raises his hand, exercising his old authority over her.

BR. : Turn not on me, my child, but pause and think.

YZ. : But pause and think, with all my life a wreck?
'Tis time to strike, not think; to strike with
hate,

To trample out your life and spurn you hence.

BR. : You go to Alexander; should he die,
His queen would hold dominion o'er the world.
To rule the world were not so hard a lot.

YZ. : O base, base, base as demons scorned by
Brahm!

I would not stoop to this—a coward's deed.

She commences to break down under the strain.

But tell me why my life is poisoned thus.

BR. : Yzdra, you have but me to trust; no more
A child, but woman fully grown, I trust
Your womanhood, your blood, and tell you all.
Before your birth the gods decreed that you
Should live on poisons, gain this poisonous
power,

But kept their reasons hid until but now,
 When oracles revealed the state must fall—
 The King, your Father, lose his rule, his life,
 Unless the Grecian army's march were stopped
 By death to Alexander brought by you.

Yz. : But what of me, who had my life to live—
 My happy human life, my hope of love,
 That you have baffled darkly from my birth?
 I stand here impotent and gaze at life,
 A nameless horror, loathed by the world.
 Give back the life you took away from me!

Br. : Not loathed by the world but named of men
 In bright emblazonry on honor's scroll,
 As she who saved her country, saved her sire,
 A maiden hero worthy of her race.

Yz. : What owe I to a sire I never saw—
 A sire who leagued with thee to break my life?
 Br. : The gods have willed, and gods must be obeyed.
 Yz. : I will not do it; could not stoop so low.
 Br. : *Rising to his full dignity and threatening her.*
 The mandates of the gods must be obeyed;
 If not, upon your soul the consequence.

Yz. : It cannot be!
 Br. : Have you forgot so soon
 The hour I told you of your Father's will?

Yz. : Oh, God! So sweet it was!
 Br. : You told me then
 You longed to do some service for the state;
 To do some mighty thing, some valiant deed;
 And now you falter when the chance is come.

Yz. : It was my dream of girlhood.
 Br. : Poros asks
 His daughter to be worthy of her Sire—
 To give herself, as many men have given
 Themselves, to save your land and ancient race.
 Yz. : I am a Princess worthy of my line;
 I would obey my Sire, obey the gods,

Would save the state and be a Queen in all;
But not through baseness.

Br. : This would not be base.

Yz. : I could not do it.

Br. : Yet you could not live
The life you dreamed, whichever course you
chose.

*The expression of hate comes back into her face.
She steps forward, grasping the spear tightly,
and is about to strike, but pauses again, over-
awed by the old authority.*

In one your name will be forever praised
As she who loved her country, served her gods;
The other course, if taken, brands your name
As one who, disobeying King and gods
Through woman's weakness, fell as falls a tree
By lightning shattered. Not alone this life
You lose; through bleak eternities of lives
The gods will hunt you, flying from their
wrath—

A horror to yourself, a name of scorn.

Yz. : It cannot be! It cannot, cannot be!

Reaching out her hands to him appealingly.

I could have been so happy living life,
A woman merely in some humble lot;
A wife and mother feeling tiny hands,
Reached out for my protecting mother love;
Or just a careless girl to live as once
Among my jasmine bowers and dream of life.
So little would have made me happy; now—

Br. : Aye, now you choose the brand of infamy,
Or glory ever brightening, sung of men,
A name for poets' hearts to conjure with.

Yz. : I could have been so happy, would have asked

So little. Oh, to sink at once in Brahm
 Forgetting all the pain, the broken hope!
 And yet I would find vengeance ere I die!

BR. : You choose the way of duty marked divine.

YZ. : It may be I shall try. Now leave me here
 Alone, yea, all alone. I cannot stand
 It more. In pity for my weakness go.
 It may be I shall do it. Go.

BR. : I go,
 But charge you on your conscience, for your
 weal,
 To do the gods' high will, and save the state.

She sinks down, hiding her face.

YZ. : Go! But go!

As he moves away, she falls to the ground.

BR. : The gods decree that you
 Shall save your people and your father. Now
 I go. A little later you yourself
 Will see where honor points. Till then farewell.

YZ. : *Rising.*

I shall do what I will; my life is mine—
 My little left of life—nor owe I aught
 To country or to kin, to you or him,
 But vengeance, vengeance, vengeance! Now
 begone.

BR. : Consent unto our plan or die to-night.

YZ. : Or die to-night!

BR. : Aye, such is Poros' will.
 You know the choice. Farewell.

YZ. : Or death to-night!

(End of Act I.)

ACT II.

Alexander's quarters at the court of Taxiles.

A pavilion tent. Two practicable doors on either side of the back, one leading to an inner pavilion and the other to the camp. Between them is a couch with steps leading up to it, and a low altar at one side. Alexander, Hephaestion and a Page discovered. Alexander reclines on the couch. The Page sings.

Is this but dream!
So close I seem
To hold
The lips, the breast
My passion pressed
Of old.

Again one kiss!—
The moment's bliss
Is fled,
Like joy that flies
Ere yet surprise
Be dead.

ALEX. : What, longing still for Macedon, my Page!

Are not these Indian maidens fair enough?

To Hephaestion.

Perchance some languorous Persian charms his
thoughts

To swift Pinarus' stream where Persia fell.

The captive maids were fair.

HEPH. :

Indeed, my Lord,

We lost as many captives as we took—

But we to women yielded, they to men;

Full half our army wear the Persian yoke.

ALEX.: It is my plan to fuse at length in one
 The many nations bound beneath my rule;
 And inter-marriage builds foundations firm
 For future empire.

HEPH.: Greece has owned your sway;
 Athens and Sparta dread your God-sent power;
 Cilicia, Egypt, Lydia, Scythia, Crete,
 Are yours; the Medes and Persians call you
 Lord,

Oh son of Zeus! Great Asia's Emperor!

ALEX.: Not yet is all of Asia in our hand,
 Nor can it be until this Poros bends
 His stubborn pride to sue our clemency
 For life and realm; on him we march, and when
 His head shall bow, a reed before the wind
 Of our swift onslaught, when his armies flee
 Like scattered sand before Sirocco's blast,
 Then mayst thou call me "King," for none
 but he

Is strong to stop our progress for a day.

HEPH.: To Taxiles, our host, this day has come
 A further reinforcement for our aid.

ALEX.: His friendship cheers the troops.

HEPH.: Would Poros now
 Alliance make, as Taxiles has done,
 It would be well.

ALEX.: How seem the men to-day?

HEPH.: They talk no more of home and child and
 wife,

But each of valor brags to new-found friends,
 And all seem well disposed for further wars.

ALEX.: 'Tis well! Ourselves will pass again from
 tent

To tent and cheer their reborn courage on,
 With speech of ancient sieges and the spoils;
 Of honor won and honor yet to gain.
 How like you India?

HEPH. : Well, indeed, my Liege;
 The Indian men are brave, the women fair;
 The land itself is rich in things of worth.
 Could Aristotle, though he taught your youth,
 Surpass these Brahman sages?

ALEX. : Much I doubt.
 Who comes?

HEPH. : The motley minded Proteas.

Enter Proteas with an air of great importance. He is dressed in the Persian fashion and prostrates himself before Alexander in the manner of the Persians.

ALEX. : He is as blown up with his tidings as is a horse with the wind colic; yet would it be safe to gage a province that the matter of his tidings is of no more weight than air.

HEPH. : My Liege, if the message seem to him of so much importance, its burden must be chiefly of himself. Perhaps he is in need of money.

ALEX. : Now Zeus forbid!

It is the way of men of little worth to give themselves airs of importance, to swell and to strut, whenever anything, however trivial, gets into the hollowness of their skulls.

HEPH. : One would think he came with India in his right hand, Mount Olympus in his left, and a half dozen provinces tucked under his arms, that he might offer you a small token of his esteem.

ALEX. : Well, let us hear.

Speak up, most worthy Proteas, and tell us what god fills thy sails with the breath of his inspiration.

PROT. : Would the son of Ammon, the friend of Ares, the emperor of the world, most valiant

and most mighty, deign in the magnificent lavishness of his kindness to hear tidings from me who, merely man, prostrate myself dumb before his divinity.

ALEX.: Now may Hermes aid thee! Speak on.

PROT.: My Liege, there waits without an embassy.

ALEX.: I pray Zeus, the protector of strangers, to forgive thee their waiting. What is the appearance of this embassy, and from whom comes it?

PROT.: It is, my Lord, an embassy of most magnificent appearance; the very elephants are adorned like our Grecian courtezans, from mere homesickness I did almost love them; the leader is a man of most admired comeliness, and beside him ride a maiden veiled and a Brahman who seems old enough to be great-uncle to Kronos.

ALEX.: But didst thou not learn from whence they come?

PROT.: From one who calls himself an emperor—
Poros by name.

The manner of Alexander suddenly changes, taking on the force and swiftness of a man of action and the dignity of an emperor.

ALEX.: *To Hephaestion.*

Bring in the embassy; we meet them here;
At once.

HEPH.: *Moving toward the door.*

The gods obey your will, my Liege.

Enter the Rajah, the Brahman, etc.

While they make their obeisance, others spread costly gifts at the feet of Alexander.

ALEX. : Accept our kingly welcome for yourselves
 And him who sends you. For his gifts so rich,
 And something strange unto our Grecian eyes,
 We give their certain due, an emperor's thanks.
 In this with Poros we ourself will vie,
 Returning friendship with munificence.

RAJ. : To your dread feet, great Emperor, we come
 From Poros, who has filled our mouths with
 words
 Of friendly greeting. These unworthy gifts
 Are but the shadow of his good intent.

ALEX. : What will has Poros other then to give?

RAJ. : The honor of alliance. Furthermore,
 He offers aid should you such aid require
 In following ever eastward conquest's path;
 Safe conduct for your troops across his realm,
 And you yourself he fain would make his guest.

ALEX. : This offer, frankly made, we would accept
 With equal frankness.

RAJ. : One thing more, my Liege,
 The King with faith in your acceptance charged
 This Brahman, who is chief of all the realm
 In wisdom and philosophy, with words
 More fit for him to utter than for me.

ALEX. : Philosophers and poets we have held
 More worthy homage than are sceptered kings.
 The diadem of thought upon his brow
 Compels our reverence.

Be welcome here.

The Brahman motions an attendant, who goes to the door and ushers in Yzdra, veiled, and her maidens; then the Brahman walks slowly over to Yzdra and lifts the veil. Alexander starts in surprise and glances at Hephaestion, who looks at him.

ALEX. : *Aside to Hephaestion.*

Think you, could Phryne's self have been more fair?

HEPH. : Not Phryne, nor the wave-born Cyprian.

BR. : O son of Ammon, Poros purposing
To bind himself to you, yourself to him
In bonds more lasting than a kingdom's troth;
Has bade me offer you for Queen and wife
His only daughter, whom he loves right well—
The Princess Yzdra. He—

During this speech Alexander has shown increasing emotion and now, without waiting for the Brahman to finish, he interrupts, speaking rapidly. Yzdra has been looking toward the ground, but with the first lines of the following speech she looks up at him in surprise and from here on shows an ever increasing interest in him. At the close of the scene her voice and her manner indicate that she is deeply touched by his courtesy.

ALEX. : A woman's heart

Is gift more precious than a king can give.
It has not been my custom to extend
My conquests thus, or take unto myself
The maids that came within my power. The
wife
And daughter of Darius both received
Full grace. And yet, because the maid is fair,
And somewhat also for the kingdom's weal,
I would be glad of this; if she were glad,
And came without enforcement—giving love.
What says the maiden?

BR. : Sire, a name like yours
Wakes love in women's hearts.

ALEX. : But what says she?

YZ. : My father wills. I lie within your hand;
 And yet an Indian Princess yields not thus
 Her quick consent. The daughters of my house
 Have pride of lineage and strength of will;
 We choose from those who prove themselves
 for us.

ALEX. : So proud and fair; you seem a Queen in all.
 And yet you come not quite unwillingly
 To crown your beauty with my name and
 realm?

YZ. : Your Grecian cupid shoots one single shaft,
 And Grecian bosoms yield them to the wound.
 The Indian God of Love has arrows five
 With flowers barbed, and with each flying
 shaft
 He seeks a separate sense. When all have
 flown
 And Love gains access through the several
 wounds,
 Then only Indian women yield their hearts.

ALEX. : I trust not to my armies or my state,
 My kingly order or divine descent,
 To storm this citadel of love, but trust
 My manhood simply, and the strength I own.
 Hephaestion, see our guests are well bestowed.

HEPH. : I will, my lord.

ALEX. : *To the Rajah.*

This afternoon we hold
 Some further conference, and then will ask
 More fully of your country and your king,
 Of whom the voice of rumor speaks afar.

To Yzdra.

Of you, my Queen, I beg the courtesy
 Of taking these, my quarters, for your use.

YZ. : I would not dispossess you.

ALEX. :

Soldiers find

Their home, their comfort, anywhere.

YZ. :

I thank

You, King, for this—

(Speaking very low) and all your courtesy.

ALEX. : Ere Phoebus stays his golden chariot wheels
 I come to you and crave an audience;
 But first must make inspection of the host;
 Perchance, my Princess, you would care to
 come
 And smile upon the troops?

YZ. :

Indeed, my Lord.

Exeunt.

*The stage is darkened for a moment to give the
 lapse of time.*

Enter the Brahman and the Rajah.

BR. : They have not yet returned.

RAJ. : It makes me laugh
 To think of viewing thus the host which soon—
 Its leader dead—will pass like summer snow.

BR. : Not gently will it pass; for, when the troops
 Are left without their king, each petty chief
 Will seek supreme command, and Grecian
 blood,
 By Grecian swords set free, will flow un-
 stanch'd.

RAJ. : Then Taxiles will turn upon his guests,
 And each will murder each while we look on
 And laugh, content.

BR. : From far will we look on!
 Once Alexander dead, our gracious host—
 “Friend Taxiles” — from forced friendship
 lapsed,
 Would wreak his will.

RAJ. : 'Twere well indeed to fly
 And make what speed we can before the youth

Has quaffed the deadly sweetness of her lips,
For should suspicion pass but near our names,
An instant death would follow.

BR. : When he dies,
His army, mad with grief, must spend its hate
On Taxiles, and thus we catch two birds
Who took themselves for eagles with one snare.
The girl played well her part and drew him on
With beauty's swift allurement.

RAJ. : She I thought
Seemed not averse to answering his love
With love returned, for just ere they went out
A strange new light came gleaming in her eyes,
New accents tuned her voice and made it sweet.
Did you observe the change?

BR. : I also saw;
But should she love, it could not hurt our plan.

RAJ. : Nay, rather would it help us; for her heart
Will join her mind, and both, with doubled
power,
And purpose doubly strong, will strive to wake
In him the passion that fulfils our aim.

BR. : Ay, loving, she will seek with stronger will
To win him to her arms; but, loving not,
Her mind is set to do the holy deed.

RAJ. : In either case we gain our purpose.

BR. : Yea.

The Rajah walks to the door and looks out.

RAJ. : They are not coming yet. I would we knew
If love so long delays them on their way.

BR. : When love points out the path, the way grows
long

In time, but short to sense.

RAJ. : 'Twere well to know.

Enter Hephaestion.

RAJ.: We wait the coming of the King, my Lord.

HEPH.: I also seek the King.

BR.: They tarry long.

HEPH.: But now I crossed a corner of the camp,
And all men spoke to me with one glad voice
Of how our Emperor and your fair Queen
Had gleamed an instant there on all men's
sight.

It seems the King proclaimed a feast to-night
In honor of your embassy and told
How not with pain across your stained spears
Would we your kingdom enter, but as guests,
With garlands decked and feasting by the way;
And when he showed in sign of peace and
truth—

More sweet than peace herself, the matchless
maid,

A murmur spread among the host that soon
To general tumult rose in glad acclaim;
But they rode on and sought each other's eyes.

BR.: Perchance they cannot pass athwart the
crowd.

HEPH.: The soldiers throng about them praising
both.

A sound of shouting is heard in the distance.
Hephaestion steps to the door and looks out.

HEPH.: They come with half the army following.

*The sound of cheering gradually becomes more
distinct and then enter Alexander and Yzdra,
the latter flushed with excitement. The sol-
diers shout again and Yzdra goes to the door
while Alexander stands behind her looking at
them. As she turns to come back toward the*

center, she sees the Brahman watching her, shudders and tries to regain her composure, losing in a moment her joyousness. Alexander greets the three men, but is all the while watching Yzdra. He steps over to her as she stands glancing at the Brahman and trying to regain control of herself.

ALEX.: The audience I craved this afternoon
Must now be held, so many silken hours
Have slipped unfelt between our wayward
fingers.

Yzdra stands motionless. He glances at the three men who bow and go out.

Queen, I claim the greeting promised by
Those wondrous eastern eyes that charmed my
sense.

You will not give me welcome?

Yz.: Welcome, King.

Suddenly and rapidly

You must forgive me that I am o'ercome;
The sudden view of greatness opening out
Has filled mine eyes with mist, my mind with
cloud

And something too of girlhood's diffidence
Oppresses me. I am not very old,
Have not seen much of life and mighty kings.

ALEX.: And yet you come not quite unwillingly?

Yz.: I hardly know as yet. Oh, give me time!

ALEX.: Nay, time for what, my Queen.

Yz.: In girlhood oft
I dreamed as maidens do of future love,
Of how a king would come and win my heart

By valour, courtesy and kingly mien,
A mighty king he was, a noble man.

ALEX. : A mighty king am I, perchance a man
Not all unworthy of a maiden's dream;
But now your beauty bows me king and man,
To seek your throne of womanhood and sue—
A captive, prostrate there, for life and love.

YZ. : For life and love!

(*Aside*) It cannot, cannot be!

(*Aloud*)—My life and love were yours before I
knew
Your name; before I found you aught but
dream;
But now—Oh, give me time! a little time,
Before I wake. The dream must fade so soon.
Oh, give me time!

After a pause.

I cannot dream again.

ALEX. : Reality is fairer than your dream.

YZ. : Reality!

ALEX. : Is here, my Queen, my Child.
I would not push you forward to the leap,
Yet passion rising in me stronger grows,
And momently increasing makes my heart
Forget its calculating thought to build
A future empire's strength from your consent.
My manhood speaks to you with waking love;—

Yzdra steps toward him impulsively.

You love me then! Confess!

The expression of pain comes into her face again. She turns away.

YZ. : It cannot be.

ALEX. : What cannot be?

YZ. : You do not understand.

ALEX. : Love makes swift conquest of a soldier's heart.

It eats like poison through me, blood and bone.

The shouting is heard again outside. Alexander hesitates a moment, looks at Yzdra, and then goes to the door.

YZ. : (Aside) Like poison! Aye, more deadly swift in me,

It shatters like the lightning, leaving naught.

(Aloud) You do not understand; it cannot be.

Enter the Brahman, unseen by Alexander. He stands looking at Yzdra and raises his hand in command, fascinating her with his gaze. Alexander motions the troops to be silent.

ALEX. : Beside the feast to-night we now proclaim
That games be held in honor of the Queen,
And many prizes, gold and things of worth
Ourselves will give to those who most deserve.

The soldiers cheer again. Exit Brahman.

But now let all disperse and rest awhile.

Another cheer. He stands watching them as they go.

The soldiers hail you as their Queen and mine,
So yield you must; I never fail in aught.

Yzdra stands motionless gazing straight ahead of her. She speaks mechanically without cadence in her voice.

YZ. : It may be I shall do it.

ALEX. : Trust me now.

Yzdra speaks still mechanically as though forcing herself to speak, but there is now some slight modulation in her voice which trembles a little.

YZ. : Ah, King! I trust your love; I fain would yield;

My every dream of girlhood changed to life
Before me stands. A king you are, a man
Of valour, courtesy and kingly mien
Beyond my thought.

ALEX. : And yet you love me not?

She turns towards him and speaks wildly, putting all her soul into the words; and desiring him to understand her, though realizing that he cannot do so.

YZ. : I love; yea, love too much; 'tis love that brings
Refusal to my lips. One last ideal
I clutch with straining hands. It cannot be.
I love you, love you, yet it cannot be.

ALEX. : Nay, then it shall be!

He steps toward her quickly, throws his arms about her and stoops to kiss her. She pushes him back violently and speaks very wildly.

YZ. : Death! Your death and mine!

ALEX. : What mean you?

Enter the Brahman behind Alexander; they do not see him.

YZ. : Death. Your death and mine.

It is too much. O Gods, that this should be!

ALEX. : What mean you?

Yzdra sees the Brahman and staggers toward Alexander, falling to her knees beside him and reaching up for his hand.

YZ. : (To the Brahman.) Go! In pity go!

Alexander draws away his hand and leaves her without support; she falls to the floor.

YZ. : Oh Gods!

Alexander has followed the direction of Yzdra's look and now sees the Brahman, on whom he turns fiercely.

ALEX. : What meaneth this? 'Tis thou who must explain.

BR. : I know not what she means, but know she loves,

And think the maiden's mind must be distraught

With sudden greatness and the love she owns,
With thought of you and your divinity.

ALEX. : A truce to compliments.

BR. : She meaneth naught.

Poor girl, her unused wits go wandering,
O'ercome with passion and her sudden joy.
But I, who have some skill with soothing herbs,
Some knowledge of the mind, will soon restore
Her reason, make her yield such proofs of love
As oft a maid, though loving, long withholds.

ALEX. : But now she spoke of death; her death and mine.

BR. : Those words meant naught; she will unsay them soon.

YZ. : That will I never do. The truth is mine And honor, though I die in saving him.

She rises to her full height and stands facing the Brahman, her eyes flashing, her voice under control and her face showing perfect determination. For the first time, she has more force than he and he feels that he has lost his power over her. He moves involuntarily toward the door, but she steps in front of him, blocking the way.

YZ. : He who has played so ruthlessly with lives Now shifts to save his own. He dreads the change

To some despised shape, most like himself,—
Some snake, or slinking jackal; yet his death
Could not requite me for the evil done,
For life and love, for hope and womanhood.
Some subtile torture of the frame and mind
Are best for thee.

Turning to Alexander.

My Liege, I tell you all.

Alexander steps toward the Brahman.

ALEX. : What hast thou done?

The Brahman takes a dagger from his robes and strikes at Alexander.

BR. : I shall not die alone.

Yzdra springs forward and hits aside the Brahman's arm. The dagger falls and Alexander puts his foot on it.

YZ. : Nor I.

ALEX. : Attend the Princess. Call the guards.

Enter Hephaestion with two or three soldiers; then Yzdra's women.

ALEX. : Hephaestion, guard this hoary demon well,
And put the others from the selfsame brood
In chains. Let all be gagged.
(To the guards.) And you, my friends,
Talk not unto the troops.

HEPH. : Your will is law.

Hephaestion and the soldiers lead out the Brahman. The women are helping Yzdra toward the other door.

ALEX. : When you have quite regained your strength
and calm,
I come to learn more fully of these things
That now are dark to me. Whate'er the truth
'Tis best that we should grace the games to-
night
From joined thrones. The Brahman will be
safe.
The secret must remain between ourselves.

Yzdra goes out supported by the women. Alexander stands in thought and then takes a goblet from the steps of the couch.

This wine I pour to Ammon.

He goes up the steps till he stands above the altar, on which he sprinkles a little wine.

Father, God,
 Be now thine ear attuned to hear my prayer;
 Let now thy heart, though filled with bliss
 eterne,
 Remember once again my Mother's face,
 Where white she lay in some dim woodland
 glade
 And felt thy godhead stooping through the
 dusk
 To crown her beauty. Now remember, King,
 Thy joy, her sorrow, and the child she bore,
 Who here with suppliant hands about thy knees
 Lays claim with double right to aid divine.
 Oh, Ammon, God and Father, hear my prayer!
 Now guide and guard me. Let thy strength
 be borne
 A shield before me, onward through the world,
 Down paths of honor, up the hard ascent
 That valour climbs to wrest from victory
 The wreaths of war and love. Now lead me on
 To world-wide empire and that other throne
 Where in a woman's heart I, crowned, would
 rule.
 Oh, Ammon, God and Father, hear my prayer.

Re-enter Yzdra. She speaks in a hard, restrained voice.

YZ. : 'Tis I who come to you.

ALEX. : The truth at once!

YZ. : I must disclose a deed so vile, so base,
 That demons thinking on it pale with fear,—
 A shame set burning on the front of Ind
 To make her ways a bye-word to the world,

And leave my name a thing obscene, abhorred,
For far, revolving years to shudder at.
Yea, I who but a moment since you loved
And in a little moment more will hate,
When once you know my vileness, I who speak,
Who loved you, King; who love you, love you
now,
From birth was dedicate to work your death,
By means most base.

ALEX.: Oh horror! You I loved.
YZ.: Ay, "loved." You will not love me any more,
But soon will spurn me where I clasp your
feet,
Myself, myself abhorring. Hear the tale:
That Brahman from my helpless infant years
Mixed poison with my food until I grew,
Not knowing this myself, a poisoned thing,
That starved hyenas did they know, would
shun.
You have the truth.

Alexander starts back.

ALEX. : No harpy is more foul!
YZ. : The gods themselves determined this should be
And spoke through him in trance their oracles,
Obeying which, he made me what I am.
ALEX. : I hear the words but cannot take the sense,
They have no meaning.
YZ. : Hear me now and heed.
My kiss is poison and my love is death.
ALEX. : Your love is death. 'Tis false. That cannot
be.
YZ. : No serpent is more deadly than my lips;
He gave me poison till my life was charged
With horror, nameless, loathsome and accursed,
Then he with Poros plotting, sent me here
To win your death.

ALEX. : But you have saved my life.

YZ. : I love you, King.

ALEX. : I cannot think 'tis true
You have this power.

YZ. : I killed a helpless child.

The poison takes a few short hours to work.

ALEX. : This is too horrible.

YZ. : And yet, 'tis true.

ALEX. : The horror grapples strongly with my love.

I love and loathe. Love's wound was swift and
deep.

YZ. : You could not love a loathsome think like me.

ALEX. : You saved my life. We must take time for
thought.

Ere night I will inform me of the truth
If this could be. It passes all belief.

YZ. : Too true it is. The child I kissed was killed.

My youth was passed alone with one old
nurse,—

The Brahman's tool, who feared my deadly
touch;

There is no room for doubt, the Rajah knows.

ALEX. : From him and from the Brahman will I
learn.

YZ. : Think not too hardly of me. Speak some word.

*Alexander starts toward her impulsively
and then draws back showing both love
and aversion.*

ALEX. : Love lingers yet, I cannot cast it out.

YZ. : The fault was theirs alone, though mine the
doom.

When first I made discovery of my curse
They gave me choice of winning you or death,
And then I loved you.

ALEX. : Zeus! My love is strong;
My horror too. I must take time for thought.

Enter the Page with numerous soldiers.

PAGE: The soldiers seek your orders for the games.

ALEX.: I go with you at once. And you, my Queen,
Farewell. I pray you grace our feast tonight,
Perchance by then we may devise some plan,
And see more clearly things that now seem
dark.

I humbly take my leave.

YZ.: Farewell, my Lord.

The soldiers cheer.

SOME: Long life!

OTHERS: and love unto the King and Queen!

Yzdra and Alexander look at each other sadly and then go out by separate doors. The stage is darkened for a moment.

When the stage again becomes visible on the right is a platform bearing a table and two thrones; on the left a platform with a table and throne. On the tables are golden drinking cups. Below each platform is another table. Slaves stand waiting to serve. A cheer is heard outside and then enter Taxiles, preceded by a small bodyguard and followed by the chief men of the kingdom. Taxiles takes the throne on the left, the guards stand behind him and the others range themselves below. A louder and more prolonged cheer, followed by the Macedonian battle-cry is heard, and then Alexander enters. Behind him come Hephaestion, other Greek Generals, one Persian and Proteas. Then follow three of the Cavalry Companions as a guard. These are dressed in their own uniform, Hephaestion wears Persian costume and

the other Greek Generals are dressed in the Macedonian manner. Alexander wears a combination of the Persian and Median royal costumes. He goes to the vacant throne which is the farther from the stage of the two. Taxiles rises and they exchange salutes. Hephaestion seats himself on the steps just below Alexander. Proteas after prostrating himself, stands to one side and the others take seats at the table. While they are doing this, Alexander talks aside to Hephaestion.

HEPH.: How fares my Lord?

ALEX.: The Queen has told me all.

HEPH.: Some fearful thing?

ALEX.: Most fearful and most strange.

She saves my life disclosing treachery.

HEPH.: Of whom?

ALEX.: Of Poros and the Brahman both.

HEPH.: The Rajah too?

ALEX.: He also knows the plot.

I have learned all but will not tell you all.

The Princess comes to grace our festival,

But for the absent men make some excuse;

Hephaestion rises.

HEPH.: The Emperor bids me tell what all should know,—

The reason why we lack tonight two guests,

Whose absence something mars our festival.

The Rajah of Abhishara prepares

With necessary haste his messages.

Which tell of how the embassy has sped:

His presence much would grace our company,

His absence dulls our joy. The Brahman old

O'erwearied with the burden of his years,

Which bore not easily the journey here,

Betakes himself to rest and lonely thought,
 As is the custom with philosophers
 Who find their pleasure in the mind, and scorn
 Such joyous usages as games and feasts.
 The Princess Yzdra comes and having her,
 Our lack of these, the absent guests, seems
 naught.

ALEX. : Thou, Proteas, we do at once appoint
 For this one night, to bear our cups to us
 And cheer our mood with talk. Not yet begins
 The feast, nor shall begin until to us
 The Princess Yzdra comes.

THE TROOPS (*Outside*) : The Queen! The Queen!
 All hail the Princess Yzdra!

ALL (*Within*) : Hail, all hail!

The Princess enters. She is very pale but has perfect control of herself. Alexander steps down and leads her to the vacant throne. Proteas kneeling, hands her a golden cup.

ALEX. : My Princess now, with your most gracious
 leave,
 We will commence our feast and festival,
 And honor you whose presence honors us.

Yzdra bows and makes a gesture of assent. Hephaestus motions the attendants. Some fill the winecups. Others bring in dishes. Musicians enter with various Greek instruments and range themselves on the steps of the couch at the rear of the stage. After an instrumental prelude played on the flutes, the Page who sang at the opening of the present act sings.

In all the world I see your face—
 By night, by day, in every place;
 Where Phoebus burns through western
 skies

I find the glory of your eyes,
 And Cynthia, silver on the sea
 Your girlhood seems, at rest in me.

A Greek slave girl sings the answering stanza.

And when my eyes are closed in sleep,
 Your image safe within they keep;
 In dreams I touch your lips, your hands,
 And breathe the words love understands,
 But waked from dreams I sigh alway
 For you who miss me, night and day.

Both Together.

Ah Love, as in the vacant sky
 When night is past and dawn is nigh,
 There lives alone one planet's blue,
 So all my Heaven has only you;
 So all my Heaven has only you.

Yz. : A sweet, sad song, Oh King.

ALEX. : Love unfulfilled
 Breeds strange illusions.

Yz. : Yet the singer told
 Of absence only; sadder songs would come
 From one who sought the bourne where Life
 meets Death,
 And smiles to see its passion changed to peace,
 In vast annihilation, finding calm
 Unending, timeless, senseless.

HEPH.:

Passion's songs

Come undefeated, struggling through the void
 From singers hushed in Hades who can give
 To love its only immortality.

YZ. : But see, some further pleasure comes to us.

Enter Greek dancing girls. They dance to an accompaniment of the players. During all this scene, the feast is in progress. Proteas says nothing but has comic business such as stealing wines and food, and approaching the King and Yzdra each time with a pronounced obeisance. He is evidently filled with a sense of the importance of his office and orders about the servants with arrogance.

ALEX. : My Queen, how pleases you our Grecian dance?

YZ. : I like it well and would see more of them.
 The music chimes a sadness like mine own.

ALEX. : (Aside) Be not so sad.

YZ. : (Aside) What help is there for us?

HEPH. : The Queen I trust ere long will lead us back
 To watch her beauty conquer Macedon.

YZ. : I would be glad of that.

HEPH. : What have we here?

Enter a Hindu juggler with his attendants. While he is performing two or three of the famous Hindu tricks, Proteas stands open-mouthed in amazement and forgets to fill the cups. After the first trick Proteas speaks, but keeps his eyes upon the Hindu.

PRO. : My Liege, I think he must be half divine;
 No mortal man could do such wondrous things.

HEPH. : Amazement fills me.

ALEX. : Yea, 'tis very strange.

During the second trick Proteas shows increasing fear and at the close he starts to prostrate himself before the Hindu.

ALEX. : Stand up. Stand up.

HEPH. : This thing is wonderful.

ALEX. : *To Yzdra.*

Our Grecian wisdom seems but poor indeed,
Beside your eastern learning.

HEPH. : Socrates

For all his knowledge could not reach to this.

YZ. : Our thought is old, yet stretches upward still;
Onward and upward till it clasps the gods,
But all is impotence when sorrow comes,
It cannot free the heart where anguish dwells
Or dry the smallest of a woman's tears.

ALEX. : Yet courage often wins what thought gives
up

And hews its way to sunlight from the dark.

YZ. : *Aside, touching her breast.*

'Tis midnight here.

ALEX. : I see a sluggish dawn.

At the close of the third trick, the soldiers outside are heard.

The Soldiers.

The games! Do not forget the games! The
games!

ALEX. : Indeed, we had forgot. The soldiers wait.

Rising.

Do you lead on unto the games and soon
The Queen and I will follow; first we hold
Some further conference of private things.

Taxiles rising, bows to Alexander and, Yzdra and goes out followed by his train, and then by the Greeks. Alexander and Yzdra alone come down to the center of the stage.

YZ. : What have you done?

ALEX. : I know the awful truth;
The oracle was clear; I must believe,
And he who voiced the god confirms it now;
There is no room for doubt.

YZ. : Then none for hope.

I know you cannot love me any more.

ALEX. : I cannot choose but love in spite of all.

YZ. : It cannot be your love is like mine own
That rends me, speechless, with its agony.

ALEX. : But one poor way I see.

YZ. : Oh, tell me that.

ALEX. : A strange, sad way it is and leads to death.

YZ. : To death but not to love.

ALEX. : To love fulfilled,
Then death.

YZ. : Ah, love fulfilled is all I crave;—
To cling unto your lips, then welcome death
And throw life's emptied goblet in the dust.
I love too much, for life beyond your arms
Has naught for me.

ALEX. : And naught for me, oh Queen.
This love is strong indeed, his arrows wound;
And I, the conqueror, who thought to rule,
Am bowed in vassalage; the world and life,—
My joy of conquest and the stress of fight
Seem nothing more to me.

YZ. : Yea, love is strong,
It bows me, sways me, fills me, takes away
My power of thought; I only crave to come
Unto your arms then hide myself in death.
But you? Whatever happens, you will live.
Now tell your plan.

ALEX. : To yield ourselves to Fate.

YZ. : You cannot mean to die, accepting all
The horror and the shame of such a death;
So young, in mid career, for my dread love,—
That foul, polluted thing!

ALEX. : (*Sadly but firmly.*) Yet this I mean;
But not at once; one further deed I do.
And then the world-wide empire won, I take
The crown and die.

YZ. : I will not have it so!

ALEX. : My love is stronger than the bonds of life.

YZ. : *Very wildly and with all possible intensity.*
He loves as I!

She springs toward him.

I do accept your love.

ALEX. : But one thing more I do before the end;
I thirst for vengeance on the dastard king
Who planned this coward's trick and poisoned
you.

YZ. : *Slowly and thoughtfully.*

My people expiate my Father's fault.
I grieve for them but grieve not much for him
Who justly falls. He gave no love to me,
And yet the ending of my ancient race
Through me, brings sorrow.

ALEX. : Love forgotten seems.

YZ. : Ah, no! A moment's grief and that is all.

Be swift and sure, my Father's host is strong.

ALEX. : Or weak or strong, I shall defeat them soon.

Then vengeance satisfied, world-empire won,
We drink our cup of passion, yield to Fate.

YZ. : Ah! love is strong!

ALEX. : I do not fear to die.

'Tis best to seek the shades with blazing
course,

A star across the night, not slowly droop

When men have half forgot how once you shone.

YZ.: Yea, that were good, to live one perfect hour,
Then fall like stars while all men stand amazed.

ALEX.: There seems no other way for you and me.

YZ.: What do you with the Brahman?

ALEX.: He shall go

With ignominy heaped, and if he will
May tell his jackal king the lion comes.
Tomorrow morn shall see our march begun.

YZ.: Ah Love, do swiftly this,—your last great deed,

And then we drain the cup, let come what will.

ALEX.: It cannot come too soon.

THE SOLDIERS (*outside*): The King! The King!

Enter Hephaestion.

HEPH.: The soldiers grow impatient.

ALEX.: Now, we come.

(*Exeunt.*)

End of ACT II.

ACT III.

Scene I.—A Corridor in the Palace of Poros.
 Scene II.—Yzdra's tent in Alexander's camp on
 the afternoon before the battle of the
 Hydaspes.
 Scene III.—Outside the tent of Poros.
 Scene IV.—Yzdra's tent after the battle.

Scene I.

A corridor in the palace of Poros. Poros discovered. Enter Prince.

PR.: Again I greet you, Sire.

PO.: Be welcome, Son.

No news has reached me yet. I would we knew
 What so delays the Brahman's messenger.

PR.: My mind forebodes some dire mischance.

PO.: And mine.

I never played this hypocritic game
 With any zeal, a man should fight with arms.

PR.: The way we took was pointed by the gods,
 But still my mind keeps boding ill on ill.
 There must be news ere long.

PO.: My patience wanes.

PR.: What made you send the Princess Yzdra's
 nurse

So hotly after her?

PO.: How knew you that?

PR.: She passed me speeding swiftly on her way.

PO.: 'Twas best the Princess should have someone
 by

Who knew her fearful secret and who could,
 If need there were, sustain the Brahman's
 plans.

She reared the girl and she is worthy trust.
How fared you on your errand?

Pr. : Well, my Lord,
If present plans should fail, in three day's time
You can command an army worthy you.
I found the separate chiefs each well-disposed
With love and loyalty to serve your cause;
They all have raised their men and wait your
word.

Po. : That news is good; should our first arrow fail
The bow is bent to send the second forth.
But look, who comes?

Pr. : It is the Brahman, Sire.
Po. : The Brahman!

Pr. : Ay, all woe-begone and weak,
With clotted hair, his garments soiled and torn,
He scarce can stand.

Enter Brahman.

Po. : What brings you in this plight?

Br. : To arms! to arms! there is no other way.

Po. : The King refused her then.

Br. : He learned our plot
And pale with anger marches on you now.

Pr. : How could he learn the plot?

Po. : No time for words!
Go you, send messengers to all the chiefs.

Br. : The Princess learned by accident her power,
And through a woman's weakness told the king.

Po. : He did not doubt the truth?

Br. : How could he doubt?
I said that fever might have killed the child,
But she had told him of the oracle
And none there is who disbelieves the gods.

Po. : It was the truth that fever killed the child.

Pr. : And not the poison?

Po. : No, for I have learned
 Its mother died of fever just before,
 And that was why it wandered off alone;
 Its death proved nothing.

Pr. : Nor disproves it now;
 We need no proof beyond the oracle.

Br. : If there is one who doubts the truth of dreams,
 Or thinks the words I uttered in my trance
 Were not directly spoken by the God
 Let him believe the Princess is the same
 As other maidens are.

Pr. : None such there is;
 We cannot doubt a dream or oracle.

Po. : Or true, or false, it does not matter now,
 The war is on our hands; the Grecian comes.
 Where is Abhisara?

Br. : Two nights ago
 He left me while I slept and took away
 The scant provisions we had gathered up.

Pr. : It cannot be that he is traitorous.

Po. : Go you and do our bidding, raise the host.
 Though all should traitors prove, ourself will
 fight
 And be this Grecian's death or die by him.
 A death of valour passes life in peace
 When peace dependeth on captivity.

Exit Prince.

And you, our royal curse be on your head,
 Our curse, and if it come, the country's doom.
 No more will I be led from valour's course
 To follow darkly twisting paths of stealth,
 Or prop my kingdom on uncertain dreams
 That make me scorn myself, and leaned on, fail.

Br. : My Lord—

Po.: Nay, hear me speak. When first I gave
 Consent to yield the Princess to your will,
 My mind foreboded fearful things to come,
 But now I fight, my own brave way is left.

Br.: And I, with you, will face the Grecian darts,
 Inciting all to fight for King and Gods.
 My plan has failed, some demon thwarted us,
 So now I aid your courage in the field.
 I faint for lack of food.

Po.: Go you to rest,
 And I will make provision for the war,
 Then later, we will hear your tale rehearsed.

Curtain.

Scene II.

Yzdra's tent in Alexander's camp on the bank of the Hydaspes. It is the afternoon before the battle. Yzdra discovered reclining on a couch; slaves are fanning her.

Enter Nurse.

NURSE: My Lotos Flower, your Father bade me take
 His swiftest elephant to follow you,
 Lest in this strange new world you feel the lack
 Of me and my accustomed services.
 I missed you many times but find at last.

Yzdra rising furiously motions the slaves to leave. As they go, she stands looking at the Nurse.—Then breaks out in uncontrolled passion.

Yz.: Thou here! Thou dare to come and face me now!

I know thee, what thou art, and scorn thy wiles
Of unforgiven infamy.

NURSE: My Child!

Yz.: Nay, "Child" not me! I know thee, know myself,—

The thing that thou hast made me. Vengeance
waits.

NURSE: You mean my death!

Yz.: Ay, death! Look not about;
Thou canst not fly, but when thou goest from
hence

Thou goest a stricken thing, with poison filled,
To die a hateful death.

NURSE: Not that! Not that!

Yz.: 'Tis Justice only, dost thou tremble now
In pity of thyself who pitied not
Thy foster-child?

NURSE: Oh, grant some other death
Less awful in itself, aught else but this!—

Yz.: It might be that the poison would not work,
Despite the Brahman's wisdom.

Gods, dear Gods,
How happy would we be if this were proved!
And we could live and love and rule the world,
Forgetting all this coil of hate and tears.

Yzdra begins these lines with a start of surprise as the idea strikes her and as she speaks them half to herself, and thinking of Alexander her manner becomes gradually less hard and her passion subsides till at the close she speaks dreamily with nothing in her voice and eyes but her love for him.

NURSE: It could not fail. Forgive. My death is sure.

YZ.: *Pleading for some confirmation of her hope.*
You know that death is sure?

NURSE: Forgive me, Spare!

YZ. *Wildly again.*

Didst thou spare me! Nay, then I make the test!

She springs toward her and then stops suddenly a look of bewilderment on her face.

YZ.: I cannot seem to do it.

NURSE: Spare me! Spare!

YZ.: I could have done it once.

NURSE: Forgive me.

YZ.: Yea,

I cannot help myself, for love has come
And tamed me from my wildness. Go in peace.
Yes, go! Since life is sweet, I give thee back
Thy few grey years and suffer all myself.

The Nurse looks at her doubtfully for a moment and then hurries out. Yzdra throws herself exhausted on the couch.

After a pause.

YZ.: She really seemed to love me years ago.

After a shorter pause.

I wonder if my garden looks the same
And if those climbing roses reached the tree.
Perhaps the Nurse could tell me.

(She calls) Nurse. Oh, Nurse!
She is not there. I never shall forget

The garden, nor those childish dreams I
dreamed,
And told them to the roses.

*She goes to the door to look for the Nurse
just as a slave ushers in Hephaestion.*

HEPH.: Greetings, Queen.

YZ.: Be welcome, General.

HEPH.: But why so sad?

YZ.: I cannot quite forget my garden home
Nor all the dreams I dreamed among the hills;
And sometimes in my sleep I seem to wake
And feel the flowers that I loved so well,
Unseen, but all about me, everywhere.
And sometimes, even when the king is by,
And speaks of love to me and I to him,
A sound or scent will bring my garden here;
Then all the past comes flooding to my eyes;—
It is a part of me and must remain.

But this is naught to you. You bring me news?

HEPH.: The usual news;—that Alexander longs
To see you once again. He sent me here
To ask if he might come at once.

YZ.: Ah, yes;
'Tis afternoon and every crawling hour
Since yestermorn when last I saw the King
Has stretched to double length its weariness.

HEPH.: The king but now returned to the camp.

YZ.: How fared his scouting party?

HEPH.: Well, I think.
Your Father's host upon the other shore,
Keeps close to camp, and we must linger here,
Until the flood abates; we cannot cross.
The King may come at once?

YZ.: Yes, bid him come.

HEPH.: My feet are shod with Hermes sandals,
Queen,
To bear with swiftest speed your messages.

Exit Hephaestion.

YZ. : Yet once again he comes, yet once again
My passion springs to meet him.

She looks at herself in a burnished copper mirror.

Fair I am.

That matters not, he could not love me more,
If all the gods should with each other vie
To heap divine perfections on my head ;
He would not love me less, if beauty changed
To strange deformity.

Enter Alexander.

Ah, Lover, King,

So long has absence seemed, so very long !

ALEX. : Yea, like eternity to souls unblessed.

YZ. : But are you wholly mine ? When you are here
I would not have you King or General,
Or aught I cannot share, but mine, and mine,
And mine alone, the well loved lover only.

ALEX. : All yours I am. The world outside is like
Some dim remembered dream when one
awakes ;
My life is yours, and soon—this night per-
haps—

I die to hold you closely, mine indeed.

YZ. : So soon ?

ALEX. : The battle will be joined tonight.

YZ. : Ah. do not risk the battle !

ALEX. : This one deed
To crown my life before the eyes of men,
I do, and then at last, world-empire won,
I yield me to my passion, hold you close,
My own indeed ; the world and life forgot
In love's full ecstasy of eyes and lips.

My love is strong and binds me more than Fate,
To work its will.

YZ. : The gods protect you, Love!
Do not neglect to send me messages
Of how the battle goes. Remember her
Who waits and watches through the lonely
hours,
A prey to all the fears love conjures up.
And yet, I would some other course had led
To love fulfilled than this sad way we climb
Who mount upon the corpses of my kin
To victory. My Father and my race,
Our ancient name, through me are doomed to
death.

ALEX. : They fall, but love upon them stands alone;
And love is all that counts; for love I give
My lordship of the world, and you your race.

YZ. : My love may not, at last, so fatal prove;
I sometimes hope again.

ALEX. : That cannot be.
At first I doubted if the Brahman's lore
Had probed so deep the secrets of the gods;
But ever when I hoped a phantom came
From that pale child who wandered near your
home
And felt the magic of your poisoned lips.

YZ. : No hope!

ALEX. : And then so real this horror seems,
So present to my sight disgraceful death;
I tremble at the leap that love compels,
But will not falter here upon the brink.

YZ. : The curse was mine, be mine alone the doom!
I will not have you share my fate and shame;
The world is yours with life and other loves,
Let death be mine, I bare me to the stroke,
Beseeching death from you to give you life—
The only thing my fatal love can give.

Yzdra bares her bosom, imploring the stroke.

ALEX.: Nay, Love, put by that thought; we two are strong

To face our destiny unfaltering;
I am resolved to make you all my own—
And ere to-morrow's stars I come to you
To call you "Bride," though Death be there to smite.

YZ.: It shall not be! My love implores your hate,
I clasp it to my breast. Oh, leave me now
And let me take myself where nevermore
Your eyes shall fill with horror at my sight;
Or, let me go and hide myself in death;
The grave alone can cover shame like mine.

ALEX.: Come life, come death, our hearts are joined
for both.

And love shall be fulfilled.

YZ.: Then go, my King,
And certain victory attend your course;
Then hide within my arms your sovereignty.

ALEX.: I shall not fail. The troops are on the march
And I, their leader, tarry here too long.
Love give me wings to win and come again!

YZ.: Farewell, and may the gods fulfil my prayers
To bring you swiftly back, victorious.

Curtain.

Scene III.

Outside the tent of Poros. Poros and attendants discovered. A furious storm. Enter Brahman.

BR. : What news? They say the Greeks attempt to cross.

Po. : Ay, up the stream, just where the river bends,
A sentry saw them struggling in the flood.
I sent the Prince to beat them down the bank;
They will not win against the tide and him.

BR. : What troops went with the Prince to meet them, Sire?

Po. : A scanty force, but strong enough to quell
This mad attempt. Who but a hare-brained boy
Would risk the crossing, and on such a night?

Enter a messenger.

MESS. : To arms! The Prince has fallen and the Greeks.

Their army in array, are marching down.

Po. : The Prince has fallen! Is our son then dead!

MESS. : They reached the shore some moments ere he came;

His force they overwhelmed and him they slew.

Po. : Nay then to arms! let each man fight for king
And country, for his life, his home, his lands.
To arms! to arms! Ourselves will lead the van.

Enter a second messenger.

Po. : Well slave, thy news?

MESS. : The news is black, my Lord.

Po. : It better fits the night. What is it? Speak.

MESS. : The Rajah of Abhisara has sent
To Alexander messages of peace

And offered firm alliance 'gainst your state.

BR.: The curse of all the gods be on his head.

Po.: How know you this?

MESS.: A captive Greek has told.

Po.: Enough! This night will see a battle fought
 That shall surpass the glories of our Ind
 And dim the deeds of all our storied chiefs.
 We shall be sung of in the coming years
 And taught to children when their infant hands
 First learn to draw the bow; our names shall be
 Familiar to their ears, like household words
 For honor, courage, strength and hardihood.
 Yea, while we fight, the souls of heroes dead
 Will turn them backward on the way to Brahm
 And think a moment of remembered fields
 Not told of more than this shall ever be.
 Attend me all, your king to conquest leads.

ALL.: Lead on, lead on!

Curtain.

Scene IV.

The same as Scene II. Yzdra is reclining on a couch; the Greek slave girl is in attendance.

SLAVE.: My Queen, I sing you now the last sad song
 That Sappho wrought in Lesbos, long ago.

Yz.: Oh, sing it not! No rumor yet has come
 Of how the battle goes. I cannot heed
 Your minstrelsy when heart and ears and eyes
 Are strained to meet his tardy messenger.

She goes to the door and listens.

The King succeeded in his mad attempt
 To cross the swollen river. Night and storm

But made it worse. He could not brook delay
 But would lead on, though all the elements
 Conspired with Poros darkly for his doom.

Enter Hephaestion fresh from the field.

HEPH. The field is won and Alexander comes.

YZ. : Oh, gods, I give you thanks! But is he safe?
 Without a wound?

HEPH. : Without a wound he comes.

We gained this day a greater victory
 Than Issus or Arbela. Poros lives.

YZ. : For that again I thank the holy gods.

HEPH. : He fell into our hands with many wounds.
 The Rajah held aloof; the Prince succumbed
 To greater force, though long he fought and
 well.

YZ. : Poor Prince and Brother! Would that he had
 lived.

And yet I do not know. It would have been
 Most hard for him to miss his ancient state,
 To see his country vanquished and his king.
 Our race is proud. How went the battle then?

HEPH. : We led our army toward the Indian camp
 And Poros marched on us, until he found
 A plain and halted; there in full array
 Each drew his army up. We turned their flanks
 And then, their rear attacking, hemmed them in.

YZ. : The slaughter lasted long?

HEPH. : They would not yield
 Until their leader sank beneath his wounds
 And left the field; for while his strength held
 out

He led with wondrous valor, charge on charge.

YZ. : I oft have heard him called a king indeed,
 A man of noble bearing, strength and skill—
 One born to rule, and not to know defeat.

Through what strange ways the gods work out
their will !

Not long ago I sought to serve the state,
And now I scarce can weep my country's doom,
My father's bondage and my brother's death ;
So love has changed me from the thing I was.

HEPH. : But had they won it had been worse for
you—

For then had Alexander found defeat.

YZ. : *Aside.*

And now finds death.

(*To Hephaestion.*) It all seems horrible.

HEPH. : On victory does horror still attend—

A bird of evil omen swooping down
To wet its dripping beak with loathsome food
And spread defilement on the pomp of war.

YZ. : *Looking at Hephaestion.*

The victors even, come with stained arms.

HEPH. : Last night unusual horrors marked our
strife—

The swollen stream and then the tempest dread
That shot the firmament with thunder bolts.
The very gods themselves seemed taking part—
The Indians to protect the native host,
While all Olympus rallied to our aid,
Assisting Ammen's son to victory.

YZ. : It was a dreadful night !

HEPH. : More dread to me
Than any tumult of the elements
The Brahman seemed.

YZ. : Was he amid the fray ?

HEPH. : He spoke as prophets speak, like one in-
spired ;

And ever where the battle fiercest raged
He came, despising death, to urge the troops
With imprecation and encouragement.
A dreadful sight he was ; with blazing eyes

And voice that shrilled with anger of the gods
 He urged the Indians on, and where he came
 Like some avenging Fury, all the Greeks
 Fell back dismayed and dropped their blood-
 stained spears.

At length a far-shot arrow found him out;
 But even then, upon his elbow raised,
 He still urged on his men; at last he swooned.
 The Greeks around him pressed with wondering
 looks
 And took him captive. Soon they bring him
 here.

A confused shouting is heard. Hephaestion goes to the door. Enter soldiers half carrying the Brahman. He is very weak and his robes are stained and torn; but the moment he sees Yzdra he straightens up and stands supported by the soldiers. Yzdra looks at him, showing first defiance, then pity, followed, as he raises himself, by fear.

BR. : Oh thou, who workest thus thy country's doom,
 Let horror seize thee and let darkness fall
 Upon thy lustful eyes till love be turned
 To loathing. Siva, Vishnu, Brahm, delay
 Not now to change with god-sent doom
 This traitor to the thing she most abhors.
 Let her in death find no forgetfulness,
 But still remember through a million lives
 Her crime, her scorned name, her father's woe,
 Her nation's bondage and my dying curse.
 And let her burn with passion, evermore
 Unsatisfied and seeking still the love
 That made her traitorous to king and gods.
 Let her in death—

A paroxysm of pain comes to him, he pauses.

YZ. : Oh, spare me! Spare me more!

BR. : Let her in death no respite gain or peace;
And let her hear forevermore her name
A word of infamy in common mouths.

YZ. : Oh, spare me! Spare me this!

Enter Alexander. He has bathed and anointed himself since the battle. Yzdra springs to him for protection.

Ah, Lover, King!

BR. : Thee too I curse.

ALEX. : Nay, curse thyself, for thou
Art author of thine own calamity.

BR. : With cheek unblanched and bosom undefiled
I die, for I am guiltless. I alone
Gave heed to Siva's will, for Poros scorned
The gods, and she—

ALEX. : She clove to love and honor.

BR. : The gods have sent swift vengeance and the
blow
Has glanced to me, who innocent, now die
In their disaster whelmed,

I stifle!

Air!

My curse be on you both.

Oh gods!

I die!

He falls to the floor. Hephaestion goes over and examines him to see if he is dead. Yzdra stands hiding her face against Alexander who has one arm about her supporting her.

HEPH. : His ghost has gone to join the shades below;
 On this side Lethe's stream it long will wail,
 Cast out from either world.

ALEX. : (*To the soldiers.*) Bear him away.
 And do you leave us too Hephaestion.

HEPH. : I will, my Liege. Farewell.

ALEX. : Live long, my friend.
 You have my orders, let them be fulfilled.

Hephaestion goes out. Yzdra raises her head from Alexander's shoulder and holds him at arms length. They look at each other in silence for a moment.

ALEX. : At last we are together, all the world
 Shut out.

YZ. : I have you with me, wholly mine.

ALEX. : The Brahman's curse has made you pale
 with fear.

YZ. : I came into your arms and felt their strength,
 And then I did not heed him any more.
 The wound he gave is healed, and now at last
 I come to you, for I am wholly yours,
 To do with what you wish.

ALEX. : My love exceeds
 The measure I had dreamed that love could fill.

YZ. : From conquest come, you seem a god indeed,
 And I a lowly worshipper who wait
 To pour the pure libation of my love
 Upon your altar.

ALEX. : Nay, 'tis you who seem
 Divine in giving thus divinely all
 Yourself.

YZ. : 'Tis love that makes us both divine
 And lifts us from the round of petty things
 To live above the gods, know more than they.

ALEX. : You bow my heart in giving thus yourself ;
 I kneel as though before some awful fane,
 So pure, so dread, I dare not enter in,
 And scarcely dare to look where burning white,
 Beyond all mystery, Love sits enthroned.

YZ. : I only have a woman's heart to give—
 A simple thing and common, as it seems ;
 But you give up the world, world-wide renown,
 And this, without the fruits of victory ;
 I would not have you, Love, give up so much.
 Ah, yes, I would, and yet I can but doubt
 When now you see the two diverging ways ;
 One short but very sweet through love to death,
 And one that leads through years of fame and
 praise
 To honored age, if you would not prefer
 To walk the longer path, and live your life.
 I have had many thoughts since yesterday ;—
 It made me think to have the end so near.

ALEX. : There is no choice but one—through love to
 death.

YZ. : Ah, yes, there is ! The other path that here
 Seems dark and hard to tread, with naught
 beyond,
 Would soon grow easy for your feet, and soon
 You would look forward brightly, not look
 back,
 Forgetting love. Then I, from some lone place,
 Would see your glory in the setting sun
 And send my messengers to hear your voice
 And tell me of your looks.

*Alexander, with profound pity in his eyes,
 opens his arms and stands waiting for her to
 come to him. She hesitates a moment.*

Yz. : Dear Love, be not

So sad ; or yield to love for my poor sake.

Alexander spreads out his arms again. His voice trembles a little.

ALEX. : You do not know my love is strong as yours.

He turns from her to conceal his emotion and goes to the door, lifting the flap and looking out. There are golden sunset clouds in the sky and between them shines the evening star. He fastens the flap so that it stays open.

ALEX. : For you and me there is no path but one.

See, evening comes and dawn will follow soon ;
We crowd a life of passion in one night,
So let us not delay.

They stand silent a moment.

Yz. : A single night !

ALEX. : Tomorrow Hesperus looks not on me ;
I bid the world farewell. You told me once
You used to dream that souls of heroes dead
Came back in sunsets. Will you feel me, Love,
Glow all about you when the west is bright
In after years ? Now quickly come to me ;
The night is very short and death ends all.

He turns toward her and steps forward.

Yz. : If you should die I could no longer live.

One other way there is. You must not die ;
Or leave your hard-won realm without a head.

Alexander takes a scroll from his girdle.

ALEX. : I here have written out my last commands.
 Hephaestion, who thinks not of my death,
 Will come at dawn, and if I then be dead,
 This shows what course to follow. You, my
 Queen.

Have India for your realm, and with you stay
 Some Greeks until the country owns your rule.

YZ. : Not this for me! I could not live alone

In solitary grandeur, lacking you.

All things are better than for you to die,
 So hear my plan. Let passion be controlled,
 And let us live with lips that never meet,
 But joined hearts and hands.

ALEX. : That could not be.
 Not till I drain the certainty of death
 From their excess of sweetness do I live.

YZ. : When passion cooled with age we two would go
 Toward death together, happy in our love.

ALEX. : That could not, shall not be! Not Tantalus
 Can madden so with thirst as I for you,
 And not so heavy is the doom he bears
 As this would be. Life has not aught for us
 But Love's fulfillment. Let us yield to Fate.

YZ. : The hour I sought has come at last too soon.

ALEX. : No other way there is. Come quickly, now;
 We have so long delayed that love is pain.

*Alexander takes off his sword and dagger and
 lays them down. A shout is heard in the distance.*

YZ. : What noise is that?

He goes to the door.

ALEX. : Some tumult in the camp.
 The men are revelling and do not guess
 That I no more shall lead to victory.

The watch-fires are seen through the still open door. The sunset has now faded from the sky. He stands looking out toward the camp and Yzdra watches him sadly. Then she looks down at the dagger, starts and looks back at him. She says nothing, but the whole course of her thought is seen in her face.

ALEX.: They loved me well.

YZ.: *Her voice trembles a little.*

And you, in turn, love them?

ALEX.: They have been still my friends, and they with me

Have much endured; but now I bid farewell To friends and war, and yield myself to love.

After a pause.

The men will miss me.

Stretching out his arms toward the camp.

Now farewell, farewell.

Yzdra suddenly reaches her decision, seizes the dagger and stabs herself.

YZ.: Farewell, but not to them.

ALEX.: What have you done?

YZ.: The steel works swiftly.

She falls.

ALEX.: Zeus! Where is the wound?

He stoops over her, examining the wound.

No remedy for this but speedy death.

YZ.: I die.

ALEX.: If aught divine within me dwells,

Oh, Ammon, Father, now in sorest need,
Give aid unto thy son.

YZ. : No help. I die,

But you shall live and conquer other worlds.

ALEX. : There are no more to conquer, all is done.

YZ. : Grieve not for me; I loved you far too well
To let you die.

ALEX. : Go not, go not so soon!

YZ. : I cannot stay; but you for love must spare
My father and my nation.

ALEX. : God! No help!

One kiss! I come with you.

YZ. : (*Very wildly*) Not that! Not that!

Alexander throws himself down beside her and kisses her, then he starts up.

After a pause.

ALEX. : I taste no poison there!

YZ. : Not there!

ALEX. : Too late!

It may be that it was not there at all.

YZ. : With intense bitterness.

Oh God, too late! too late!

Slowly the bitterness leaves her face and in its stead comes thankfulness, which in turn yields suddenly to radiant joy.

You will not die!

She dies. Alexander bends over her for a moment, then rises to his full height, stretching out his arms toward the sky.

ALEX. : Past help of gods or men, Fate works its will.

Curtain.

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